

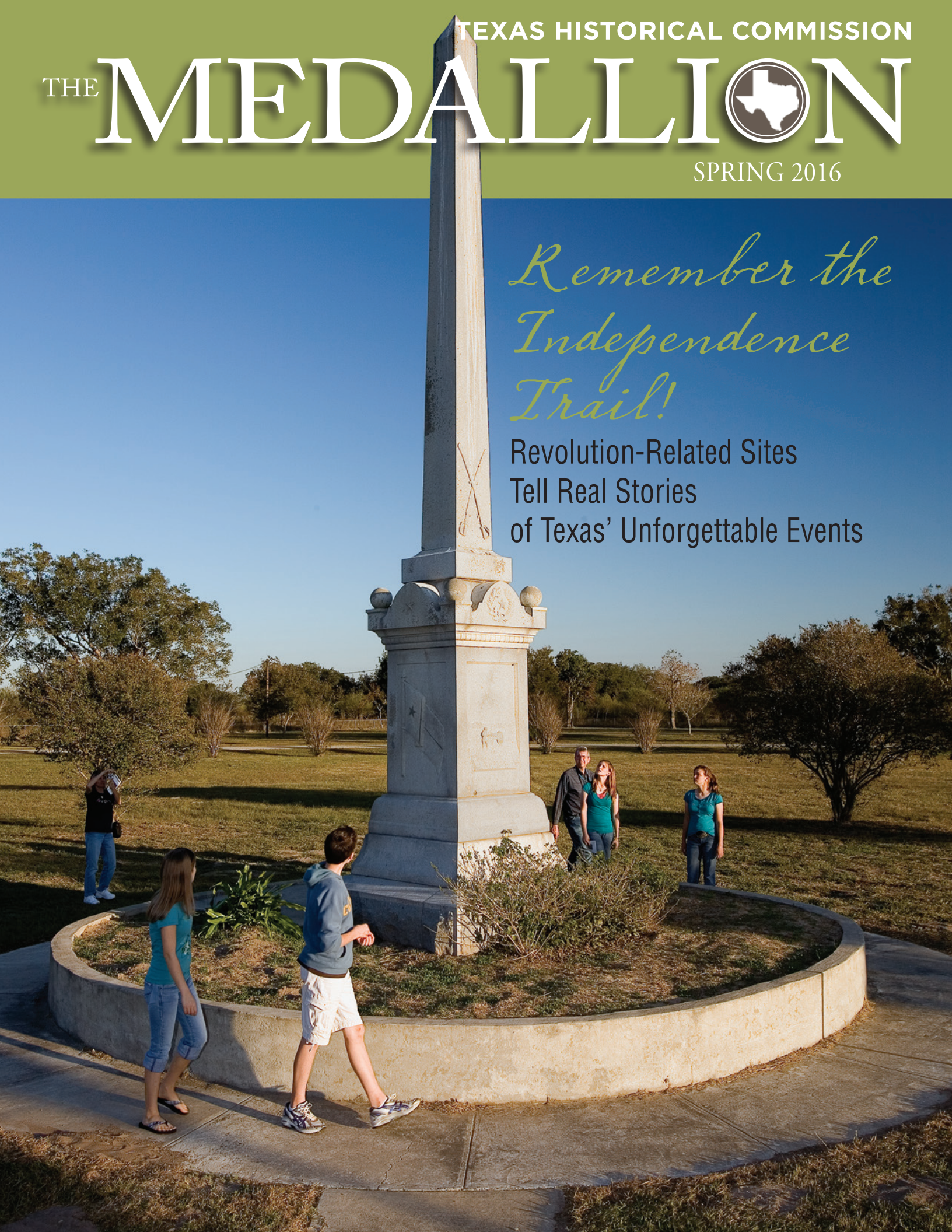
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE MEDALLION

SPRING 2016

*Remember the
Independence
Trail!*

Revolution-Related Sites
Tell Real Stories
of Texas' Unforgettable Events





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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE **MEDALLION**

SPRING 2016

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These numbers show the significant economic impact of
historic preservation in Texas.

\$4.6

**BILLION ANNUAL IMPACT
OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

\$4.624

**MILLION STATE GROSS
DOMESTIC PRODUCT**

79,419

JOBS

Source: Economic Impact of Historic Preservation in Texas, 2015



The appeal of Texas extends far beyond the borders of the United States. We certainly know this to be true in my hometown of San Antonio, where world-renowned heritage tourism sites attract millions of visitors every year. Our community understands how important historic preservation is to our present and our future, and that's why we proudly work with the Texas Historical Commission to tell our city's story.

The agency works with citizens and organizations across the state to preserve Texas' significant landmarks and state historic sites while encouraging economic development through heritage tourism and historic preservation. Last year, the Alamo and the four missions in the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park were designated as World Heritage Sites. The state and city are working together to expand and enhance the Alamo Plaza, creating an even better experience for those who visit this iconic shrine.

The Historical Commission's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program recently assisted with a restoration project at the Bexar County Courthouse. The grant work included restoration of the original 1896 double-height courtroom, which features impressive coffered ceilings and 12 decorative windows based on the design of the rose window of San Antonio's iconic Mission San José. The new courtroom is breathtaking, making our courthouse one of the most beautiful public buildings in the state.

Historical resources like these bring millions of heritage travelers to San Antonio, where they spend nearly \$2.5 billion per year and support more than 28,000 hospitality and retail employees. It's a big part of San Antonio's economic success.

I encourage all Texans to support the preservation of our heritage, culture, and history. This kind of stewardship not only provides lasting and ongoing benefits to our economy, but it also helps ensure that our unique Texas experience will continue to live on in vivid and inspiring detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joe Straus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Joe Straus
Speaker, Texas House of Representatives

The Main Street Attraction

Program Celebrates 35 Years of Making Main Streets Matter

*By Debra Drescher, Main Street Program State Coordinator
with contributions from local Main Street managers*

This year, the Texas Main Street Program is celebrating 35 years of progress. What began as a small start-up process to test a revitalization concept for Texas' historic downtowns has become a significant program—one of the country's largest—that provides visible and measurable economic benefits to local communities.

Success was not certain in the 1980s, when the National Trust for Historic Preservation introduced a formal approach to preservation-based downtown revitalization. The program's basic framework, the Main Street Four Point Approach, had only been field tested. Could a localized operational model be rolled out from a national organization? And could that be implemented through a statewide program? Turns out, it could.

Today, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) works with 87 actively participating Main Street communities. They represent all areas of the state and are all sizes, from Goliad (population 1,908) to Corpus Christi (population 320,434), now the largest Main Street program in the state.

Nearly one-quarter of Texas Main Street cities have participated for 20 years or more. Texas Main Street communities are places that include restored courthouses, like Ellis County's J. Riely Gordon-designed Romanesque Revival masterpiece in Waxahachie, a 13-year Main Street community. Texas

Main Street communities are also places with THC state historic sites, like the Starr Family Home in Marshall and Eisenhower Birthplace in Denison.



Rosenberg's Main Street nearly 100 years ago (top) and today.

Just as importantly, Texas Main Street communities are real places where unique small businesses prosper and where people gather. They are places where memories are made and new ones are born.

During Main Street's 35-year history, 177 Texas communities at some point have been designated. Main Street communities show a true commitment to restoring the economic vitality of their historic downtowns by funding staff and a local program. Dedicated volunteers contribute their skills, talents, and resources to create the community buy-in that is a big part of the success.

Although all of Texas' 87 Main Street cities have contributed to the program's success, the following communities in the Texas Independence Trail Region (see related heritage travel article on page 6) offer

an impressive representation of participants' tenure, size, and economic development projects.

ROSENBERG

Located 25 minutes southwest of Houston, Rosenberg dates to 1883, when the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway laid out a town site named after the company's president, Henry Rosenberg.

Today, Rosenberg is experiencing unprecedented growth in commercial and residential development, while holding tight to its historic charm. The downtown offers an authentic American experience that includes a mix of cultural arts, shopping, dining, and history. In recent years, downtown property owners have restored several historic buildings and filled them with restaurants and shops.

In 2013, downtown Rosenberg was named a Texas Cultural Arts District, and in 2014, it was officially designated as a Texas Main Street city. During its first year, the Rosenberg Main Street Program has held community planning meetings and started to implement identified goals, including a façade improvement matching grant program, a beautification matching grant program, and a systematic program of promotional events and festivals.



Elgin's Owl Wine Bar and Home Goods.

Rosenberg's downtown improvement efforts are off to a solid start, and Rosenberg's residents anticipate a future that is as prosperous and culturally rewarding as its past.

As Rosenberg Mayor Cynthia A. McConathy notes, "The Main Street Program has given us the tools to enhance our downtown, which is the very heart and essence of Rosenberg."

ELGIN

Elgin, Sausage Capital of Texas and a Texas Main Street city since 1990, is experiencing a new wave of reinvestment and development in downtown. Since 1990, the public and private sector has invested more than \$14 million in the downtown district. These investments preserved iconic buildings, replaced dangerous infrastructure, and helped make downtown Elgin attractive to residents and investors.

Established in 1872, Elgin developed around the railroads and had a thriving economy built on bricks, sausage, and cotton. In the mid-1980s and the 1990s, the community rallied around the importance of its historic downtown, and supported major public projects and private reinvestment in its commercial buildings.

After the last economic downturn, Elgin was reeling from many business closures that left downtown looking like a ghost town. In 2011, Elgin applied for and was chosen to participate in the Sustainable Places Project, which recommended zoning changes and downtown improvements. In September 2014, the Elgin City Council approved zoning crafted by the Main Street Board and the Historic Review Board that allowed for work/live space downtown and increased the variety of permitted business uses.

In January 2015, a downtown property sold and the new owner

implemented new zoning allowances, becoming the first Main Street building to have commercial at the front and residential in the rear. The owner also utilized the newly available Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program, and a local grant program.

"Through the years, thousands of volunteer hours, visionary leadership, supportive city councils, and extensive community partnerships have allowed Elgin to weather many storms," says Elgin Main Street Director Amy Miller.

LA GRANGE

Located southeast of Austin, La Grange is celebrating its 20th Main Street anniversary this year.

Beginning as a truly grassroots movement, La Grange Main Street dates to 1996 when a group of passionate advocates turned the tide in their community. Because of the commitment of public and private funds, the downtown square now features a fully restored county courthouse, a quaint Founders Park, new sidewalks, and underground power lines. The Main Street Program also hosts many events, including La Grange Uncorked, a weekly farmers market, and a summer movie series on the courthouse lawn.

"The Square itself is home to many cultural treasures," says Stacey Norris, La Grange Main Street and Tourism Manager, noting that Prause Meat Market, family-owned by fourth-generation Texans of German descent,



From left: Casey Johnson and Stephanie Mauldin of Whistling Duck Winery are pictured at Cottage Gatherings in La Grange during 2015's Uncorked event.

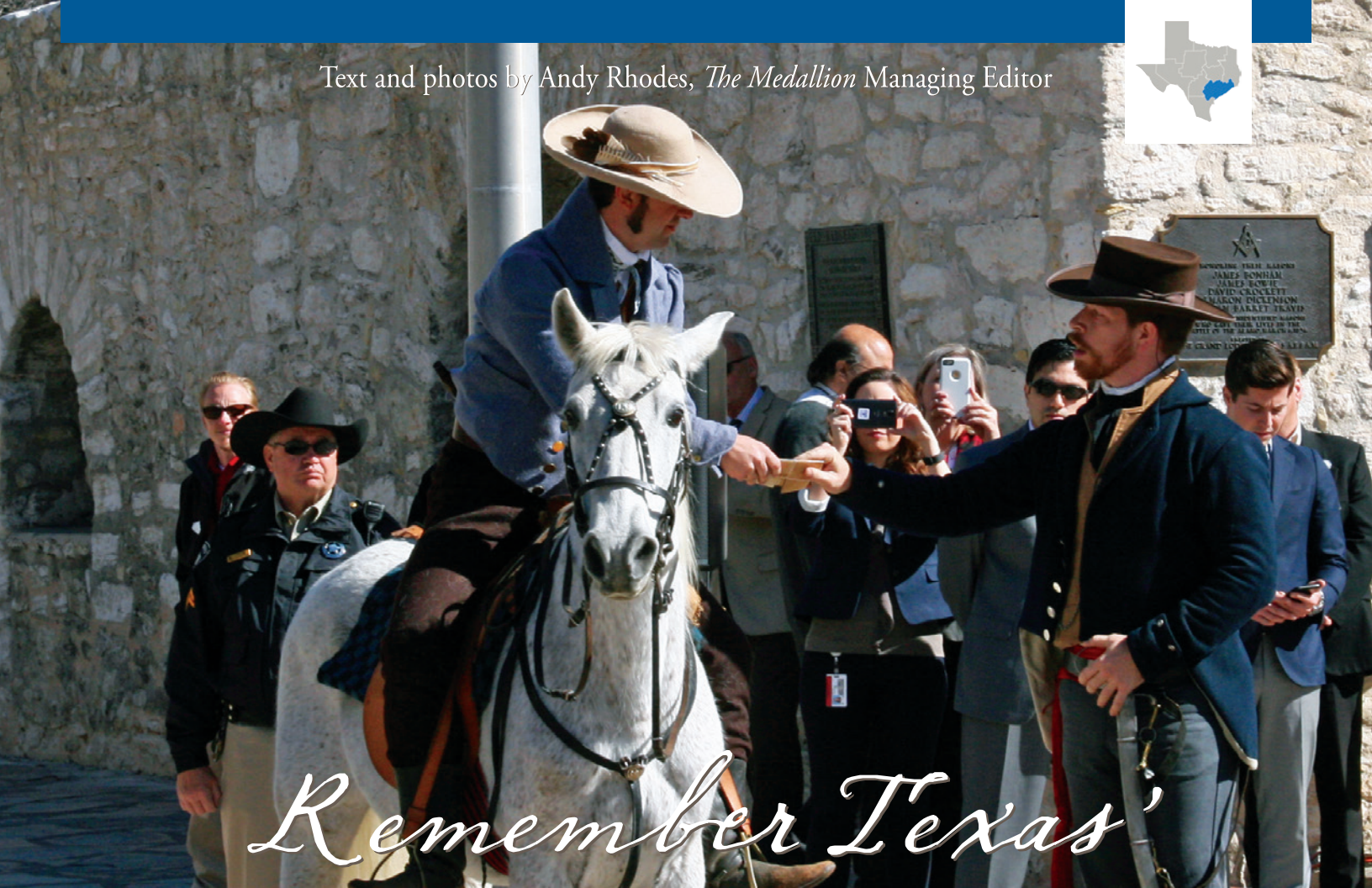
has been "perfuming La Grange with its barbecue since the 1890s." She adds that the Texas Quilt Museum showcases antique and contemporary quilt art in two 1890s buildings, and the square features a bakery housed in the same building since 1928.

BASTROP

Bastrop, situated just east of Austin, entered the Main Street network in 2007. Despite its small size (population 7,218), the community's public and private support has resulted in nearly \$26 million in public and private reinvestment downtown.

A museum and visitors center occupies the former Bastrop City Hall. In a public/private partnership, the building was renovated in 2013 through an investment of \$1.6 million by the city and Bastrop County Historical Society (BCHS).

The BCHS operates both entities and is proud of its new exhibit "Settlement Life," featuring an 1830 footboard from Bastrop's first settler and an 1825 English Bible brought to Bastrop in the 1830s. It is now the seventh permanent exhibit in the museum gallery, which also features El Camino Real, the Baron de Bastrop, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. ★



Remember Texas' Independence Trail!

Revolution-Related Sites Tell the Real Stories of Unforgettable Events

Everyone remembers the Alamo. Many people remember Goliad. But how many recollect Washington-on-the-Brazos, San Felipe de Austin, Gonzales, and Fannin? It may take a while to connect these dots on the map to the Texas Revolution, but these lesser-known sites play a key role in telling Texas' unforgettable story.

This year marks the 180th anniversary of Texas' fight for freedom, and this powerful event in the Lone Star State's history is a focal point across the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Independence Trail Region.

According to the THC's Bryan McAuley, site manager at San Felipe de Austin and Fannin Battleground state historic sites, the 180th celebration provides an opportunity for the region's Texas Revolution destinations to continue working together to tell the full story of the state's iconic heritage.

"These special dates beckon us to keep the flame alive. The number 180 may not have the same cachet as 175 or 200, but it certainly holds a value in keeping everyone attuned

to these significant events in our state's history," he says.

"One of the best things to come of the anniversary has been partnerships we've developed with other 'TexRev' sites. We're meeting regularly with the Alamo (General Land Office) and Goliad folks to discuss our shared approaches."

A result of this partnership was the recent Ride for Texas Independence, a reenactment of the delivery of Col. William B. Travis' fabled letter from the Alamo seeking reinforcements and claiming "Victory or Death." Presidio La Bahía Director Scott McMahon took the route traveled by couriers 180 years ago for nearly 180 miles, where he dressed in period clothing and was exposed to the elements. He departed San Antonio February 24 on horseback, and proceeded through revolution-related towns such as Gonzales and San Felipe, culminating in the delivery of Travis' letter on March 5 to interpreters portraying delegates at Washington-on-the-Brazos.

"I thought people would be really interested if we retraced the route and experienced the same conditions they lived

in at the time,” McMahon said. “It’s something the communities along the route could enjoy while learning about this important story.”

McAuley adds that as the capital of the Texians’ provisional government, San Felipe played a crucial role where militia mustered after a local shop printed the newspaper broadsides urging colonists to go to the Alamo.

“We take great pride in the fact that the back of the letter included the handwritten directive ‘Send this to San Felipe by express night and day,’” he says. “There was a lot of significant activity here that sometimes gets lost to Texas history enthusiasts.”

With this in mind, McAuley, McMahon, and other partners organized several educational events along the letter-delivery route, including a program at San Felipe on March 2. More than 450 area

students spent the day rotating among several exhibits, where they learned about printmaking, historical events, and home life at the site in 1836.

Three days later, McMahon delivered the letter to Washington-on-the-Brazos, site of the Texians’ General Convention and signing of the Declaration of Independence. Today, the Star of the Republic Museum commemorates the monumental events that took place there 180 years ago.

“I think Travis’ letter still resonates with us today because it qualifies what freedom is,” says Houston McGaugh, the museum’s director. “I like to think of it as a ‘Pen is mightier than the sword’ kind of thing. It gives a true description of what they’re fighting for.”

TRAVEL THE INDEPENDENCE TRAIL

Not surprisingly, the Alamo—known as the Shrine of Texas Liberty—is the focal point of Texas Revolution-related historical attractions. With its recent designation as a World Heritage Site, the Alamo (along with San Antonio’s four other Spanish Colonial missions: see related story, page 10) doesn’t lack awareness. But it serves as a significant stepping-off point for sites that do.

According to Seneca McAdams, executive director of the Texas Independence Trail Region, many travelers find that an Alamo visit piques their interest in the entire Texas Revolution.

“We’ve heard from a lot of Alamo visitors who want to learn about the rest of the Texas independence story and how it made Texas what it is today,” McAdams says, adding that a related Texas Independence Trail Region passport/visitor guide will be released later this year. “We’re hoping to entice people to explore further into our region and experience the complete historical context.”

McAdams adds that other Independence Trail Region visitors are intrigued by movies or TV shows depicting dramatized accounts of the Texas Revolution.

“It’s always good to encourage discussion, and I think we’re living in a great period for heritage travel,” she says. “It makes people really think about these different time periods, and plays right into our game plan of teaching people about the real stories of Texas.”

Education is also a top priority at the THC’s **San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site** (visitsanfelipedeaaustin.com, 979-885-2181), located in

Austin County 48 miles west of Houston.

San Felipe was founded in late 1823, and by 1835 it ranked second in Texas population (nearly 600 residents) to San Antonio. It served as the capital of the provisional government until the Convention of 1836 at Washington-on-the-Brazos. San Felipe was designed in a traditional Mexican grid pattern with several plazas, and was the social, political, and economic center of Stephen F. Austin’s colony.

The Texas Gazette, one of Texas’ first newspapers, began publication in San Felipe in 1829. In 1835, Gail Borden (founder of the Borden milk company) started publishing the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, which became the unofficial journal of the Texas Revolution.

“One of the cool stories we tell at our site is about printing history,” McAuley says. “Travis’ first letter from the Alamo arrived at San Felipe the evening of February 25, and Borden’s print shop included this news from the Alamo in the February 27 edition of their newspaper.”



Above: The THC’s Bryan McAuley assists a visitor at San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site.

San Felipe has also been an important site for archeological investigations, including a current THC project locating the Farmer's Hotel and seeking the 1835 Consultation site, where planners discussed the Republic. According to McAuley, historical documentation—including an 1824 town plat map—assists investigators with orienting the dozens of properties burned by townspeople during the 1836 Runaway Scrape retreat from Mexican Gen. Santa Anna's advancing army.



Presidio La Bahía in Goliad dates to 1721.

Archeological work at San Felipe also unearthed many artifacts from Peyton's Tavern, a former inn on Commerce Square where, in 1832, San Felipe residents could order breakfast or supper for 25 cents and dinner for 37½ cents. Archeologists discovered intact fireplace footing, eating utensils, and evidence of food eaten at the tavern, including a peach pit, pig snout, and cow and chicken bones. These stories and more about Austin's colony are featured on educational display panels throughout the site and at the visitors center inside the historic Josey Store.

"When we talk about real places and real stories, this site contains some of the great untold stories in Texas history," McAuley says, adding that plans are underway for an extensive collection of resources on adjacent property recently acquired by the THC.

Located two hours southwest, the breathtaking **Presidio La Bahía** (presidiolabahia.org, 361-645-3752) tells a darker element of the Texas Revolution story. Its early history dates to 1721, when the original fort on the bay (*la bahía*) was established on the original site of La Salle's doomed Fort Saint Louis near Victoria. The Spanish army moved the fort further

inland, and eventually built the presidio in 1749 and a chapel in 1779. It remains one of the oldest active churches in Texas. In 1829, the town's name was changed from Bahía to Goliad, an anagram for Hidalgo honoring Father Miguel Hidalgo, the "patriot priest of the Mexican Revolution."

On March 27, 1836, Col. James Fannin and nearly 350 of his men were in the chapel after surrendering a week earlier to the Mexican army at the Battle of Coleto Creek. Under the pretense of assigning them tasks, the soldiers removed and executed the Texians under order of Santa Anna. Known as the Goliad Massacre, the event ultimately fortified the Texian troops, who used the rallying cry "Remember Goliad!" as motivation in their victory at the Battle of San Jacinto the following month.

Today, a THC historical marker and stately 1938 granite monument commemorate the site of Fannin and his troops' mass grave adjacent to the presidio. Inside the fort, visitors learn about three centuries of historical events related to the site, featuring images and artifacts from the Spanish Colonial era and Texas Revolution period.

"We get a lot of visitors from the Alamo—they appreciate that it feels and looks like what they expect for Texas a few hundred years ago," McMahon says. "This is definitely not an urban environment. You can see the hills and countryside and get a real sense of what things were like here."

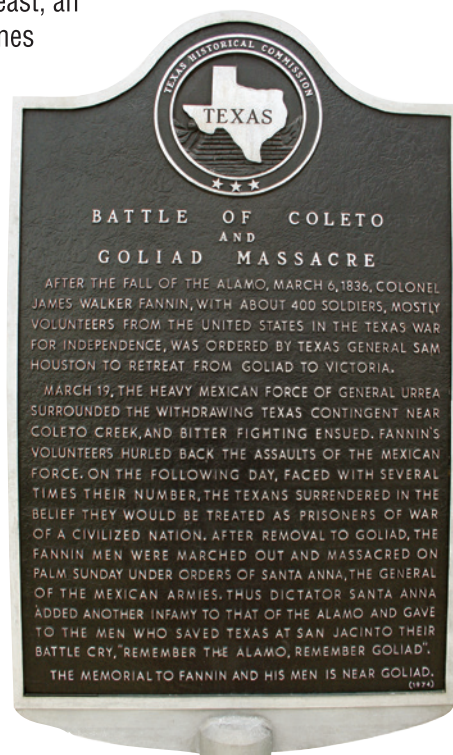
He adds that the site hosted its annual Goliad Massacre living history event in early April, and will feature an exhibit throughout the year with period artifacts honoring the revolution's 180th anniversary.

Just 10 miles to the east, an extended archway welcomes visitors to the THC's

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site (visitfanninbattleground.com, 512-463-7948), documenting the ill-fated Battle of Coleto Creek.

The stories of Fannin and his men are examined in sharper focus where they made their last stand. Self-guided tours allow visitors to experience a restored 1928 bandstand

Right: A THC marker at Fannin Battleground.





Above: A wooden structure at Washington-on-the-Brazos depicts the site where the Texans signed the Declaration of Independence 180 years ago. Right: A Texas Revolution exhibit at the site's Star of the Republic Museum.

housing interpretive exhibits, large gin-press screw placed in 1894 to mark the battle site, and 1930s open-sided pavilion constructed for the Texas Centennial.

At **Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site** (wheretexasbecametexas.org, 936-878-2214) 80 miles northwest of Houston, visitors can get an authentic sense of life in 1836, when the determined Texans signed their Declaration of Independence. Although the modest wooden structure that held the General Convention is long gone, a replica constructed 100 years later depicts the Republic of Texas' humble beginnings at this location.

An adjacent visitors center includes exhibits and a dramatic display of a reproduced Declaration of Independence. Nearby, the Barrington Living History Farm features several buildings representing Republic-era life with reenactors telling stories about a typical day on the homestead.

Also on site is the impressive **Star of the Republic Museum** (starmuseum.org, 936-878-2461). Visitors can explore informative exhibits about regional prehistory and Colonial-era heritage, with a focus on the events and individuals associated with the Texas Revolution. Several remarkable displays recount the dramatic story through captivating artwork and rare artifacts. Upstairs, dozens of exhibits portray everyday life in the region during the Republic's heyday.

"We're the storytelling museum," McGaugh says. "We let people know about the heroes, families, and folks coming to Texas and what they brought with them."

The museum highlights revolution-related artifacts in a special 180th anniversary exhibit continuing through early 2017.



Another significant Texas Revolution site that doesn't receive Alamo-level awareness is the **Gonzales Memorial Museum** (gonzalesmemorialmuseum.com, 830-672-6350) in Gonzales. The museum commemorates

"where it all began," and is known for its remarkable Art Deco building and famous exhibit on the "Come and Take It" cannon that initiated the first official battle of the Texas Revolution. In anticipation of the inevitable question, signage next to the iconic cannon states, "Yes, it really is that small!"

Although the diminutive cannon size (roughly two feet long) may be underwhelming to some visitors, the remainder of the Republic-oriented collection is impressive, along with the shellcrete building and unexpectedly compelling amphitheater built into the back of the structure. ★



Above: The remarkable amphitheater behind the Gonzales Memorial Museum.

To learn more about other significant revolution-related sites, including San Jacinto Battleground, Columbia, and Refugio, download a free copy of the THC's *Texas Independence Trail Region* travel guide at texasimetravel.com.

Mission: Bikeable

Cycling the River Walk to the San Antonio Missions

By Rob Hodges

THC Senior Digital Media Coordinator

It's absolutely possible to bike to the San Antonio Missions on the River Walk. Just don't do it like we did.

After dropping our kids at their grandparents' house one morning, my wife and I drove to downtown San Antonio intending to bike to Mission Espada and back, primarily along the Mission Reach (see sidebar). The 20-mile round trip connects the Alamo with the four southernmost missions. We checked in early at the historic Crockett Hotel, and immediately walked to the nearest BCycle station off Alamo Plaza.

BCycle is a bike-sharing venture allowing people to rent and return bikes at dozens of stations at popular central San Antonio destinations, including the missions. We purchased a \$10 day pass that included unlimited 30-minute rides. If we exceeded 30 minutes, we'd be charged \$2 for each additional half-hour, but we assumed we could avoid that by renewing at the many stations along the route.



Numerous BCycle stations line San Antonio's River Walk.

We knew it would be tight and we wouldn't have much time at each mission, but based on past road cycling experience, our agenda seemed doable. One thing we didn't count on was the bikes, which are built for comfort, not speed.

We set off in late morning at a leisurely pace, rolling past the historic

La Villita, a Payaya Indian settlement occupied by the Spanish in 1691, and the King William Historic District. Our lunch stop was the National Register-listed Blue Star Arts Complex, which has a BCycle station. We easily made it within the half-hour, and strolled through the former railway warehouses that now contain funky boutique shops, art galleries, and eateries. We settled on Stella Public House, where we shared an exceptional small pizza and salads.

Sufficiently fueled, we hit the trail again, continuing south toward Mission Concepción. Once we passed the Lone Star Brewery, we knew we were getting close but soon nothing looked familiar. We pressed on, but eventually stopped to ask for directions. A helpful local confirmed we had passed Concepción and nearly reached Mission San José. So we continued south, assuming we could catch Concepción on the return.

A wedding at San José reminded us that the four mission churches are active Catholic parishes. With the chapel closed to the public and bridesmaids in dusty rose-colored dresses gathered at the renowned rose window, we strolled through the convent and grounds, taking in the magnificent baroque architecture and reading interpretive plaques. The largest of the four missions, San José (aka the "Queen of the Missions") was founded in 1720, and the current church was completed circa 1780. Most of the mission's



A cyclist at San Antonio's Mission Espada.

buildings were reconstructed or restored in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration.

A recent restoration project was completed in 2015. It included stabilization and rehabilitation of the intricate stone carvings on the front of the church, stabilization and restoration of the rose window, landscaping in the convent's courtyard, and interior plaster repairs. Restoration work was done at all four missions by architecture firm Ford, Powell & Carson, a Texas Historical Commission (THC) Texas Treasure Business Award recipient. The THC also awarded a Texas Preservation Trust Fund planning grant for a post-restoration conditions assessment at all four mission churches.

Back on the trail, we headed south past Acequia Park to Mission San Juan Capistrano. The first thing I noticed was



Mission San Juan Capistrano

NEW TWISTS ON A CLASSIC

There's still a misconception of the River Walk as a commercialized downtown tourist attraction, but that reality changed in 2013. The completion of a major expansion and revitalization effort utterly transformed the world-famous trail. Now spanning nearly 15 miles, the River Walk is comprised of (north to south) the Museum Reach, Downtown Reach, Eagleland Segment, and Mission Reach.

Outside downtown, most of the route is unrecognizable from the original River Walk—it's largely a non-commercial hike-and-bike trail along restored river ecosystems connecting parks, historic sites, and museums. Notable aspects include public art installations, interpretive signage, native landscaping, wildlife, and local use of the trail for fitness and recreation.

With last year's UNESCO World Heritage designation of the San Antonio Missions—the first Texas sites to receive the distinction—more tourists will visit the Alamo City, and many will want to combine heritage tourism activities with cultural excursions and outdoor recreation. The San Antonio River Walk enables that.

the chapel had been limewashed since I last saw it. The gleaming white façade was a bit jarring compared to the noble weathered look of San Antonio's other missions, but then I remembered it's not unlike the missions in El Paso and other states. The limewashing followed extensive repairs to the 18th-century church, including stabilization and underpinning of the stone walls, below-grade waterproofing, and an interior rehabilitation.

With the afternoon waning, we had to hustle. We couldn't find signage directing us back to the River Walk trail, so we opted for the more direct route to Mission Espada along Villamain Road—which fortunately has a bike lane and little traffic. Espada is comparable to San Juan in some respects: the mission complexes are smaller than their northern counterparts, and they feature similar bell towers. Espada's preservation work has included interior plaster restoration, and masonry repair and stabilization of the church and priest quarters.

After a quick stop at Espada, we found the trail back to the River Walk

and began our northbound push. We made it as far as Acequia Park before conceding we were running out of daylight and would have to pass on Concepción. We parked the bikes at a BCycle station and hailed an Uber driver, who informed us he often picks up people who get to Espada and don't have time or energy for the return.

But that was not the end of our mission sightseeing. The next morning we explored the Alamo grounds, chapel, and museum before driving to Concepción. We quickly walked the grounds and admired the 1755 church, the site of an October 1835 battle where

Texian forces led by James Bowie and James Fannin repelled the Mexican army. In recent years, the church has

undergone façade stabilization, conservation of the south tower, and plaster conservation.

Although it didn't go as planned, our whirlwind tour was an adventure. We ended up spending \$12 each for the bikes (missing Concepción caused us to exceed BCycle's 30-minute deadline once). Our final assessment: doing it all over again, we'd leave earlier

and allow extra time for wayfinding and exploring. And we might even call Uber again. ★



Mission San José remains an active parish.

Dames of the Round Table

Texas-Born Women's Philanthropy Organization Celebrates 100th Anniversary

By Andy Rhodes
Managing Editor, The Medallion

How many century-old women's groups in Texas can you name? How about 100-year-old groups dedicated to fostering continental relations?

The Pan American Round Table is both, and this year the organization is celebrating in San Antonio, where it was founded in 1916 to promote cultural alliances among countries in North and South America.

"I'm not aware of any other groups like ours that have been around for 100 years," says Brownsville's Isabel Vezzetti, state director of the Pan American Round Table. "This is a very special organization, and our centennial is a wonderful way to celebrate our achievements."

Vezzetti recently convened a group of South Texas "Round Table" members at her home in Brownsville for two of its favorite reasons: to hold an educational discussion and enjoy a delectable meal. Over several hours, they talked about Round Table's origins and memorable meetings throughout the hemisphere. A consistent thread connecting each discussion was Pan American Round Table founder Florence Terry Griswold.

"Mrs. Griswold was very important for women because we were not traditionally involved in decision-making policies," Vezzetti says. "With her, there was an understanding that where women go, men will follow."

Past Table 1 Director Maria Yzaguirre, also from Brownsville, adds that Griswold encouraged women to become more active in fostering

international relations by seeking opportunities to bridge gaps and strengthen ties across borders.

Adds Brownsville Round Table member Sandra Maxwell, "We honor her legacy by staying true to our original motto: All for one and one for all."



South Texas members of the Pan American Round Table met in Brownsville.

Corpus Christi's Peggy Lasater Clark, a past state director and past alliance director general, offers additional insight about the Round Table's early years, noting that Griswold's experiences growing up on the Mexican border near Eagle Pass in the late 1800s and early 1900s shaped her approach to organizing the group.

"She took the concept of the roundtable from King Arthur's knights, with the idea that everyone at the table was equal," Clark explains. "Each seat was designed to be represented by every country in the Americas."

Edinburg's Elsie Perez fondly recalls her experience traveling throughout the hemisphere, attending conferences, parades,

and events dedicated to encouraging communication and fellowship.

"It's a wonderful way to bring women together and build bonds that you couldn't have otherwise—we all learn from each other," she says. "Another highlight is getting to experience all the different styles of food in the different countries!"

According to member Ana Flores of Laredo, the organization's primary philanthropic project is student scholarships, noting that they can be customized for each community. The Texas Round Table group has awarded more than \$1 million to students over the past several decades.

Members are currently planning the Alliance Pan American Round Table Convention, which will draw up to 800 members from the Americas. There are more than 200 groups in the Western

Hemisphere, and 20 in Texas. The convention is part of October's San Antonio centennial festivities, which, to date, include a large commemorative gathering at the Menger Hotel's THC historical marker, a parade of flags from 35 countries during the opening ceremonies, and a visit to Griswold's gravesite at nearby Mission Burial Park.

"We're looking forward to having everyone in Texas for the centennial," says Brownsville's Norma Linda Castellano, a past local table director. "When I first joined, I enjoyed meeting with women for lunch who could work and talk together, but over time, I took on more responsibility and eventually became an officer. This is truly an empowering organization." ★

Fort Lancaster Lives

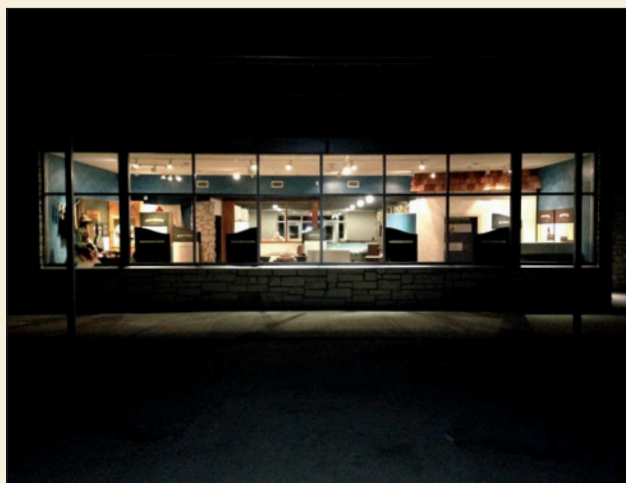
West Texas Fort to Unveil New Visitors Center

By Heather McBride
THC Senior Communications Specialist

With the end of the U.S. war with Mexico in 1848 and the discovery of gold in California, thousands of people journeyed west. One of the routes stretched from San Antonio to San Diego. Known in Texas as the Lower Road, it passed through Apache and Comanche lands. The U.S. Army protected the route, which required soldiers. And soldiers required forts.

One of these was Fort Lancaster. The fort played an important role in westward expansion by providing escorts for mail carriers, wagon trains, and settlers on the Lower Road.

Standing among long-abandoned, silent ruins, visitors to Fort Lancaster State Historic Site—located in Crockett County between Sheffield and Ozona—can step back in time and easily imagine the remote Pecos River valley post. Travelers will be greeted by the site's new visitors center, which is now publicly accessible and will celebrate its grand opening at a special event on



Fort Lancaster's new visitors center at night.

May 21. Spanning 82 acres and surrounded by the outstretched vistas of West Texas, the site is one of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) 20 historic properties.

In 1965, the Henry E. and Claude W. Meadows families and the Claire Benckenstein family donated Fort Lancaster to Crockett County. In 1968, the fort was transferred to the State of Texas. The site first opened to the public in 1969 and was designated a State Antiquities Landmark in 1983. It is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Not much remains of the old fort, but visitors can wander through its ruins and imagine the 25 permanent buildings that included a blacksmith shop, hospital, sutler's store, and bakery. The new visitors center is a renovation of an existing center dating to the 1970s. The original building remains, but a substantial new gallery exhibit was added on the north side.

New exhibits tell a more complete history of the fort and present the story of Fort Lancaster through artifacts,

images, scale models, and a life-sized camel replica highlighting the U.S. Army's experimental use of camels in West Texas. The exhibit area also includes special floor tiles representing forts and places on the journey from Indianola to Fort Lancaster. To increase visitor comfort, a new outdoor shade canopy faces the fort ruins.

"The Fort Lancaster visitors center project highlights the commitment of the Texas Historical Commission and the State of Texas to history preservation and education," said Jefferson Spilman, site manager at Fort Lancaster. "This renewed building will provide a 21st-century experience and ensure the history of Fort Lancaster continues to inspire people of all ages." ★



Exhibit above: The Buffalo Soldiers. Exhibit, above right: Culture Clash.

**FORT LANCASTER
STATE HISTORIC SITE**
629 Fort Lancaster Rd.
Sheffield, TX 79781
432-836-4391
visitfortlancaster.com

Sam Bell Maxey House Receives Preservation Award

The Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site in Paris, Texas, received a 2016 Honor Award in February from Preservation Texas, Inc.

The Victorian Italianate mansion was built as a residence for Sam Bell Maxey, a Mexican War veteran, Confederate general, and two-term U.S. senator. The Maxey family lived in the home for nearly 100 years.

The recent conservation project involved extensive repairs but maintained nearly all of the historic materials. Cypress window sashes were repaired and reglazed using the original glass, a decorative leaded glass transom was reconstructed, and shutters were reassembled using repaired and replacement parts.

For more information about the home, go to visitsambellmaxey.com. ★



Maxey House conservation.

APPLY NOW TO BECOME A MAIN STREET COMMUNITY

The application period is open for cities to apply to the THC's Texas Main Street Program.

Local Main Street programs receive a wide range of services and technical expertise from the THC, including design and historic preservation, planning, economic development, organizational management, and training.

On April 22, the THC will host a webinar explaining the application process. Optional letters of intent are due to the THC by May 13, and applications are due July 29. Application information and webinar details are on the THC's website at thc.state.tx.us/mainstreet.

CELEBRATE HISTORIC SITES FREE DAY ON MAY 1

In celebration of National Preservation Month and Texas Travel and Tourism Week, the THC will offer free admission to all 20 state historic sites on Sunday, May 1. For a complete list of properties participating and their hours of operation, call 512-463-7948 or visit texashistoricsites.com.

REAL PLACES

HERITAGE TRAVEL CONFERENCE

JUNE 13-15, 2016

AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center
AUSTIN, TX

Find more information at
www.realplaces.us

Candice's Corner

Meet the New CHC Outreach Specialist

By Amy Hammons

County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

Candice Thaler is the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) new County Historical Commission (CHC) Outreach specialist. Here's more about Candice and the services she'll be providing to CHCs.

You started working for the THC in January. What are your first impressions? My first impression was that the people working for both the THC and local CHCs are really passionate about their work. I'm also realizing just how big of a job CHCs have and how wide their reach can be—how important they are to all of our programs and efforts to preserve Texas history. I've already been warmly welcomed by so many people willing and ready to help me settle in. I'm grateful and excited to learn from, and work with, such a dynamic group of people.

What appeals to you about working for the CHC Outreach Program?

I'm drawn to the relationship-building aspect of this program. I believe those relationships provide a foundation for supporting our collective preservation goals. Preservation happens at a local

level, and I'm eager to connect local needs with state resources so each CHC can thrive.

Have you worked with CHCs before?

I previously worked for a county history museum, which had a close relationship with the CHC. The museum hosted many of its meetings and events. I also had the chance to attend CHC meetings to stay informed about decisions being made. Because of this, I understand many of the challenges and interests of CHCs. I hope to use this experience in my new role and become a resource to CHCs across our state.

What work will you be doing for the CHC Outreach Program? I'll oversee logistical planning for CHC workshops. CHC orientations are the focus this spring; these trainings run mid-March through mid-June. This summer, I'll



Candice Thaler recently joined the THC as a County Historical Commission Outreach specialist.

work to finalize details for the 2016 Story of Texas Workshop that we co-host with the Bullock Texas State History Museum, which will be held on September 26.

What types of questions should be directed to you?

Because I'm handling orientation logistics, CHCs should contact me at 512-463-9052 or candice.thaler@thc.state.tx.us for information about our upcoming orientations. I also

process appointee updates and add individuals to the CHC listserv. And like Amy Hammons, I can help CHCs find the appropriate THC staff member to address concerns or review projects. ★

More information about CHC orientation locations and dates is available at www.thc.state.tx.us/chctrain.

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Our Mission

To protect and preserve the state's historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.



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real places telling real stories

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WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

Know your Texas history? Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to medallion@thc.state.tx.us. Limit one prize annually per contestant.

Need a clue? This Alfred Giles-designed building dates to 1914 and is located in the THC's Texas Tropical Trail Region.

The photo below is an officers' quarters building at our Fort McKavett State Historic Site. After the Army abandoned the fort in 1883, settlers moved into the vacant buildings and a state highway traversed the property. Congratulations and prizes go to the first three readers who were the first to correctly identify the site: Bruce and Gary Flage of San Antonio (a father and son who live nearby and have visited the site for decades) and Larry Hobson of Edna. Thanks to all who participated! ★

